

WESTERN PEOPLE

Supplement to The Western Producer Sept. 21, 2000

MARLENE'S ARK

TEACHING BY EXAMPLE

WESTERN PEOPLE

PUBLISHED WEEKLY; ISSUE NO. 1,062

BOX 2500, SASKATOON, SASK. S7K 2C4

3

Humor

— Sometimes Nature's bounty can get out of hand.

4



Fiction

— "Early Harvest," by Helen Olorenshaw.

6

History

— A gold bracelet and a photograph changed lost memories to found memories.

8

Cover Story

— Marlene Ronsman used animals as teaching aids during a long career enlightening Grade Ones and Twos.

10



Memory

— "The Ravine," by Barbara Anne.

11

Books

12

Prairie Wildlife

13

KIDSPiN!

— Art and activities for youth.

15

Puzzles and Mailbox

A Fine Day

A good breeze and bright sun,
no dew to speak of,
looks like a fine day
to get that crop in,
and then it happens,
grain truck spews antifreeze
all over the cab,
belt breaks on the combine,
a trip to town for repairs,
then the day's spent
in mechanic mode.

— Marlace Berg Zacharias

COVER PHOTO

Marlene Ronsman with Aurora Borealis and Pokemon. Photo by Jean Fahlman. Story, page 8.

Unsolicited manuscripts are welcome
Editor: Michael Gillgannon
Features Ed.: Karen Morrison, Sheila Robertson
Editorial Assistant: Donna Skaalid
E-mail: people@producer.com

Dear Reader

Mel Lastman jumping on a trampoline like a giddy schoolboy; Jean Chretien wearing a cowboy hat like a giddy old coot; Joe Clark wearing a cowboy hat as if it were a plugged-in toaster oven; Brian Tobin wearing a cowboy hat as if it were a lobster trap; anybody but Ian Tyson wearing a cowboy hat, period; George W. Bush behind the wheel of a Formula 1 race car; Al Gore shaking hands with his good buddies, the minimum-wage tamale stuffers at Taco Bell — what do these images have in common?

They represent the things politicians will do to get their pictures

in the newspaper. In other words, they will do anything, and they won't mind looking foolish doing it. In fact, the more out of character it is, the more they seem to like it.

Well, I say, more power to them. As long as newspaper and TV editors continue to clog their papers and TV screens with pictures of politicians schmoozing with the huddled masses, the handlers of those politicians will be happy to keep arranging for these bits of fiction to be played out.

Which reminds me of a recent photograph of Al Gore mind-melding with a GM truck assembly plant worker. The GM guy had biceps like sequoia trees while Gore

looked more like, well, me. Had he wanted to, the GM guy could have reduced Gore's hand bones to powder suitable for filling sandbags, but he was being nice, perhaps even choosing to believe the lies and platitudes escaping Al's voice box. Or maybe he wasn't really listening, any more than Al was listening to himself.

"Medical care . . . education system . . . a living wage . . . old-fashioned values . . . get this country running on all cylinders . . . must stamp out child poverty . . . too many guns . . . make our seniors feel wanted . . . God, I could use a beer . . .

Michael Gillgannon

Praying for frost

Humor by Bob Scammell

Like most Canadian gardeners, I pray a lot: for sunshine, for rain, for the hail to stop; sometimes simply for next year. But on Aug. 23, 1998, I bush-whacked my way through the jungle to the only patch of bare ground in our vegetable garden, got down on my knees and prayed for frost — a killing frost.

That year was a milestone gardening year in Western Canada, marked by earliest-ever for harvesting bumper crops of nearly all vegetables, except maybe peas, which prefer cooler weather. We had no late frosts, little hail, adequate and timely rains and day after day of very hot, sunny weather.

Never before in my 25 years of gardening in central Alberta had I ripened more tomatoes on vines that were not hanging in the garage. We almost missed the prime of our crop of Sunnyvee corn simply by not daring to peek two weeks early. By pray day, the Sunnyvee and Kandy Kwik patches were high as a son-in-law's eye, but were gradually being brought down by a jungle of squash vines bearing a heavy crop of four varieties that need some frost to harden and sweeten. When my wife went to harvest corn for a meal, she went with a machete.

Yet it was not for squash, but for mercy that I prayed, for an end to all that abundance, for the death of this monster I had created when I planted



in May and June. I am the pickle boss at our place and by the end of the first week in August I'd filled every jar on the premises.

When I sought out that bare patch of ground and got down on my knees, I had just finished picking baskets of orphan cucumbers and had long since run out of doorsteps on which to abandon them. When I was a kid living in Brooks, in southeastern Alberta, where we always had the heat, plus irrigation water, I can remember every year at this time my waste-not-want-not, pickled, frozen, canned and jammed-out mother threatening to can my father in the nearest divorce court if he hauled one more unprocessed scrap of vegetable matter into her kitchen.

So my prayer for frost was a prayer for mercy, closure, an end to all this life bursting and burgeoning around me. Prayers should be reasonable, I had learned in Sunday school, and praying for frost in central Alberta was not unreasonable. In our area, the killer frost usually comes around the autumnal equinox, but my records show a mild frost on Aug. 8, 1995, and killing frosts on August 15 and 21, in 1991 and 1992 respectively. The

regional weather office reports the earliest frost on record as July 17, 1904, and the latest on July 1, 1919. Too bad those records were not set the same year to give us a record year with only 16 frost-free days.

I can tell you when my 1998 prayer was answered and the inevitable frost warnings came, my wife and I were not covering everything in the evening and uncovering in the morning as we do most years with tarps, sacking, old bedsheets and wedding dresses in an effort to eke out a few more pickles or vine-ripened tomatoes. No, we grimly let nature take its course and had a cleaned-up garden well before Thanksgiving. Such a result is one of the mixed blessings of a year like 1998. All that covering and uncovering is sort of fun if it doesn't go on too long.

Thinking of next year reminds me of perhaps the ultimate downside of a year like this. It was revealed to me by one of central Alberta's premium barley growers years ago when he came into my law office about a Farm Credit Corporation mortgage. When he finished complaining about the outrageous 5% percent interest rate then prevailing on FCC mortgages and I finished sympathizing, I congratulated him on the bumper barley crop the area had just enjoyed.

"Yes," he agreed, "but you have to remember that a crop like that takes a terrible toll on the soil." ■

Fiction by
Helen Olorenshaw

Maria was awake before her mother called. She answered but did not get up right away.

Though every door and window had been open to the August night, it was almost dawn before the frame house had given up the last of the heat that had soaked into it all the day before. Now it was pleasant for Maria to lie in the cool bed, thinking about her plans to go to university.

It would be different from the farm, and from life in the village where she'd taken her last two years of high school. There, she'd been able to spend most weekends at home. But it was 100 miles to Edmonton and such a journey in a Model A Ford over the rutted dirt roads was made only three or four times a year. After she entered university in the fall, Maria would not see the family again until Christmas.

She knew she must go. Her father would be so proud that he, an immigrant homesteader, had a daughter in university. And when she began earn-

ing money, she could help her young sisters get an education.

The sunshine pouring in the window promised another hot day and this was no time to be daydreaming. As she dressed, Maria looked out over the wheat field. It was a golden ocean flowing away until it topped the gently rolling hills to meet the sky. Wheat would pay for her tuition and books, and her board and room in the city. There would be very little for clothes or pocket money. She did not expect it, for the wheat was not really an ocean of gold. Her father had reminded her, any-

time he dug in his pockets for the dollar or two for necessities when she was in high school, that the Depression was still with them.

Maria sang as she milked the cows and fed the poultry. By the time the milk had been strained into shallow, flat pans and set on shelves in the cool pantry for the cream to rise to the top, the family had gathered around the breakfast table.

"There's no dew this morning," her father said between mouthfuls of thick bacon slices and fried eggs. He did not need to add that this was a forecast of rain before night. "I've looked at the wheat and we'll start cutting this afternoon. When we get that crop into the granary, we'll know that my daughter will go to university in the fall."

The heat had been intense for days and the wheat kernels, inspected daily, had been gradually hardening from the milk stage to that of a chewy gum.

Maria's two brothers and the hired man did not waste time talking as they ate. The mounds of fried potatoes and stacks of toast disappeared, for the men had already done an hour's work around the barns and cattle pens. Even



Photo illustration from photos by Sheila Robertson

Early Harvest

Tania and Kate, six and eight years old, had been out collecting eggs and replenishing the wood box that stood at one end of the big, black stove.

While the little girls washed the dishes and put them away, Maria helped her mother with the main task of the morning, preserving the buckets of saskatoons picked the day before. The washed berries, drops of water clinging to their silvery bloom, were soon sealed in half-gallon jars. A dozen jars at a time were brought to boil in the copper wash boiler on the stove, until purple juice oozed out and covered the fruit.

Like a squirrel storing food for the cold months ahead, Maria carried the preserves into the dim, cool cellar, reached through a trap door in the floor of the lean-to outside the kitchen. It was satisfying to see the shelves loaded with bottles of fruit, all gathered from their own wooded pasture land. Wild strawberries and raspberries floating in clear, red juice; pale green gooseberries and the dark richness of jams made from red and black currants would hold the taste of summer through the winter months.

Soon the blueberries and low-bush cranberries would be ripe in the sandy, dried-up bog across the river. The last fruit of the season, high-bush cranberries, grew in big clusters on two trees in their pasture. In another patch of bushes nearby, hazelnuts were ready to be gathered for roasting, if the squirrels didn't get them first.

Carrying a pail of water in each hand from the pump at the well, Maria glanced at the hot sky to see a small cloud perched on the eastern horizon like a scoop of ice cream on a plate. Maybe there would be rain, as her father had predicted. She hoped it would be a gentle rain. A violent storm now would twist and flatten the slender wheat stalks bearing heavy heads of grain, making it difficult for the guide to carry them to the sawteeth of the binder's knife. The wheat was at its best now, the stalks standing tall in their rows, like a well-drilled army of soldiers.

At mid-day the last of the canvases were mended, the gears and wheels had been greased and the horses were munching oats in their stalls as they stood harnessed and ready, except for the steel bits to be thrust in their mouths. At the pump on their way to

the house, the men washed their hands and wiped the sweat from their faces. The sun was directly overhead, but the innocent little ice cream cloud had blossomed into huge cauliflower shapes, stretching along the horizon.

"Sixty bushels to the acre," volunteered the hired man, who saw his summer's wages in the wheat.

"Not until it's in the granary," was the father's tense reply.

After the big noon meal, when everyone went outside to see the teams hitched to the three binders standing in a row, the clouds were dazzlingly white and the cauliflower puffs were swarming over each other, with grotesque knobs reaching high into the vivid blue sky. Here and there, feathery fingers left the swelling mass and streaked upward.

Cumulo-nimbus, the school science text had called them, "with cirrus streaks holding ice crystals." Maria fervently hoped they would blow away before they came down as hail.

The air was still, as if the whole land were holding its breath, waiting, when the first binder began its swath along the fence line. Months of work and faith would be rewarded in the golden harvest.

Maria shivered, either from excitement or from the breeze that suddenly stirred the air. Below the barnyard, the willows and poplars edging the slough reflected a weird light as they turned up the underside of their leaves. From the henhouse roof came the piercing shrieks of the guinea hens, warning the poultry that a storm was coming. The sky in the west was a clear, steely blue and the sun overhead still shone fiercely, but the thunderheads in the east rumbled as they soared and rolled and dipped.

By the time the three machines had completed their first turn around the field, the clouds had formed a solid sheet of dark grey, half-way around the horizon. Ice in the clouds growled ominously as it rose high on an updraft. Maria watched the bees streaking to their hives bordering the clover field, a sure sign of a storm.

She ran to help her mother chase the young turkeys into their coop, lest they stay stupidly out in the rain. Big drops were pelting the ground, kicking up puffs of dust where they landed.

In a quick surge, the dark cloud engulfed the whole sky, blotting out the sun. Lightning flashed from all sides and immediately thunder crashed and rolled around the horizon.

As Maria caught up to her mother, running for the house, she saw the teams galloping wildly toward the barn with the men hanging on to the reins. The wind hurled rain in all directions and made the trees dance and twist like demented things. Everyone managed to get indoors just as another thunderclap loosed a torrent of hail that bounced and leaped in a frenzy, illuminated by sheets of lightning. Hailstones, some as big as baseballs, crashed through the windows in the south and east.

While the men pushed tables and cupboards against the broken panes, Maria and her mother raced upstairs to where Tania and Kate were screaming in their bedroom. They were huddled in the middle of the bed with a quilt wrapped around them, while the rain and hail drove into the room. Maria helped her mother grab pillows from the bed and hold them against the broken windows. Here, under the roof, the roar of the hail and the crashing thunder seemed unbearable, as if the universe had gone berserk. Just when it seemed it would go on forever, it stopped.

An unbelievable stillness made Maria hold her breath. Removing the pillow, she looked out. The yard was a moving mass of hailstones, still swirling around in circles, but the storm had passed.

Numbly, the family crept outside and moved as one to the wheat field. A final gust of wind blew the clouds away and the trees shook themselves as the dog did after a swim in the river. Moisture sparkled in the sunshine and in the east a rainbow stood vivid against the deep blue. But the field was a shambles, with shattered straw churned into the wet earth.

Maria watched her father as he leaned against the fence rails, silent tears coursing down his lined face. He reached between the rails to pick up a handful of the mangled wheat and held it, squeezing it into a muddy lump, which he slowly let drop.

As he turned to look helplessly at his daughter, she managed to say, "It's all right, Dad. Maybe next year."

Found treasures

History by Jan Williams-Russell

As a child, my mother, Dorothy Bryan, would sit on her parents' bed playing with a special gold bracelet. The thick chain links were clasped together with a heart-shaped lock in the shimmering soft hue of old English gold.

She and her younger sister, Marnie, often sat and fondled the bracelet and tested out the U-shaped lock on the top of the heart and the little key hole in the centre. Nearby, on the white marble-topped dressing table was a photo of a child about two years old, held by their mother, Beatrice Bryan. Dorothy had learned the girl's name was Edna, but whenever she had asked about her, her mother had replied it was the child of a friend in England.

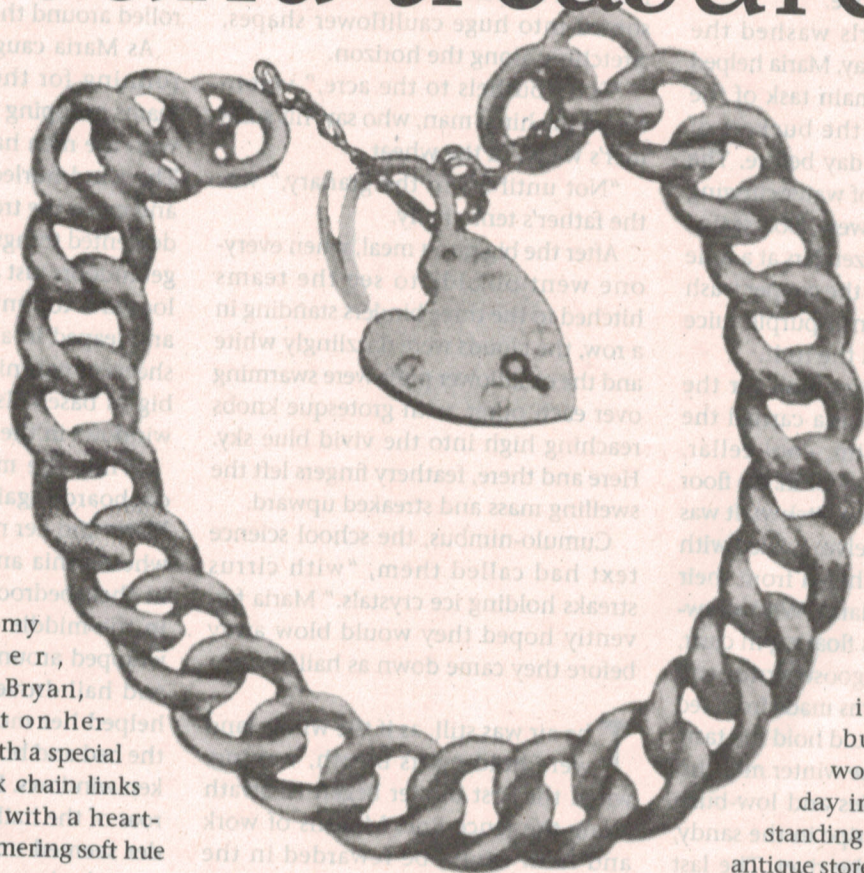
The bracelet had been given to their mother, Beatrice Murray, by their father, Leonard Bryan, before they were married. He had purchased it in England for her. They had met when she, a Red Cross nurse, tended him while the Canadian soldier was in hospital for a year, recuperating from injuries suffered in the First World War. They became engaged and she emigrated from England to Canada as a war bride in 1919.

By 1932, Leonard and Beatrice were struggling to make a living on their farm near Bridgeford, Sask. They had a young family and Beatrice was ill and

needed to be hospitalized. With no money to pay the hospital bills, Leonard reluctantly pawned the bracelet in Moose Jaw. Later, Dorothy and Marnie missed the bracelet and asked their mother where it was. Beatrice told them how badly she felt when Leonard had returned with cash to the pawn shop to retrieve the bracelet, only to find it had been sold.

The photo of the little girl also disappeared from the dressing table, but Dorothy and Marnie never forgot about these small treasures belonging to their mother.

Years later, Dorothy told her fiancé, Earl Williams, a student at the University of Saskatchewan, about the gold heart bracelet. Earl searched through jewelry stores seeking a similar design and finally purchased a fine gold chain with a little heart, which he presented to Dorothy as a wedding gift in 1948. She loved the gesture and enjoyed wearing the bracelet, but she continued to treasure the other bracelet in her memory.



In her retirement years, Dorothy loved looking through antique stores, admiring and then often buying a piece of wooden furniture. One day in 1991, Dorothy was standing at the counter of an antique store in the Broadway area of Saskatoon when she glanced into the glass case and, amongst an assortment of old jewelry, spotted a gold chain. She mentioned to the clerk that her mother had owned a chain like that, with a heart-shaped lock. The clerk reached under the counter, pulled out the chain and fumbled around, producing the missing piece. Handing it to her, he said, "It does have a heart-shaped lock."

Astonished, Dorothy held the bracelet that appeared to be identical to that in her childhood memory. On learning that it was valued at \$175, she thought to herself, "That's quite a price, and I don't need it." She returned home to ponder the find and called me to describe what had happened. I was familiar with the bracelet story and suggested she call the store back and ask where they had acquired the bracelet.

Minutes later, Mom phoned again, conveying the news that the owner of the store had bought the bracelet at an estate sale in the Moose Jaw area and that the previous owner had purchased it from a pawn shop there. The sixth

sense, difficult to describe, is undeniable when experienced. Mom and I both knew this was the very special bracelet of her childhood.

As it was late afternoon, I urged her to phone the store and ask that the bracelet be held until the next day. Better than that, the owner offered to drive by her house and deliver the bracelet, as he was just closing. Dorothy recalls that when he came to the door, "I handed him the cheque and it felt really good."

Some weeks later, her sister, Marnie McNab, arrived for a visit. Dorothy held out the bracelet for her to see. The delight in Marnie's expression and her words, "Wherever did you get that?" proved that she, too, recognized the bracelet.

But what of the little girl whose photo gazed out from my grandmother's dresser? Beatrice had rarely spoken of her early life growing up in England. It seemed the close friends and people she talked about were from her days as a nurse. She had no family: she had been raised as a foster child and her only brother had died in the First World War. Occasionally, one of her daughters would ask a personal question and she would quickly respond, "What do you want to know that for?"

It seemed there were secrets in her life she could not bear to disclose. Although Beatrice lived until she was 91, few of the details of her early life were revealed.

Amongst the photo albums, autograph books and personal papers Dorothy acquired after her mother's death was a small, black address book. In late April, 1989, while looking through this book, Dorothy noticed an address for Edna — no last name, just a street address in Devon, England. Although the address book was 40 years old, Dorothy decided to write a letter to Edna. She started the letter, "I am looking for information on someone who lived at this address in the 1920s. Her first name was Edna and her surname possibly Murray."

She hardly expected a reply, given the age of the address. Thus, on that May morning when she lifted the lid of her mailbox and spotted a blue, air-mail envelope from England, return address E.W. Murray, Northampton, she smiled in anticipation.

The letter began, "Dear Dorothy, I am sending this quickly so that you may know that your letter dated 22/4/89 has arrived at its target — me! Surprising really because I left that Devon address over 20 years ago but I have always kept in touch with my friend who still lives there."

In the letter she said her godmother, Maudie Wyatt, was a friend of Beatrice. She described a few details of what she knew of Beatrice's early life, inquired about Beatrice's family and when she and Leonard had died. She ended the letter, "I think I last saw her before she set sail for France and I seem to remem-



Beatrice and Edna, 1914

ber her beautiful skin and clear blue eyes. Have you a snap of her by any chance?"

This was indeed a letter from Edna Murray. Uncertain still as to the family ties she shared with her, Dorothy sent off another letter with details of Beatrice's family.

The postal service between Canada and England seemed to do a splendid job of delivery. By May 27, Edna wrote her second letter revealing who she was. "Really there is so much to say that it is difficult to know where to begin. Firstly Maudie always told me what a dreadful time poor Beatrice had had and how happy she was to hear at last B. had married Leonard. But Maudie said she did not know if Beatrice had ever said anything about me. When or if I ever wrote to Sask., I was

to make the letter sound somewhat impersonal. Maudie died in 1935 and I did write — just once or twice — in rather distant tone. I do hope Beatrice was not hurt. I wish she had come here before she died and we could have straightened things out a bit. But, as you say, I expect she couldn't quite face it. Poor Soul.

"I have gone through life by myself, and now, in my 77th year, I find I have three half sisters, one half brother, 19 half nieces and nephews and 28 half great nieces and nephews. It's a bit awe-inspiring!" Dorothy had discovered a half sister in England.

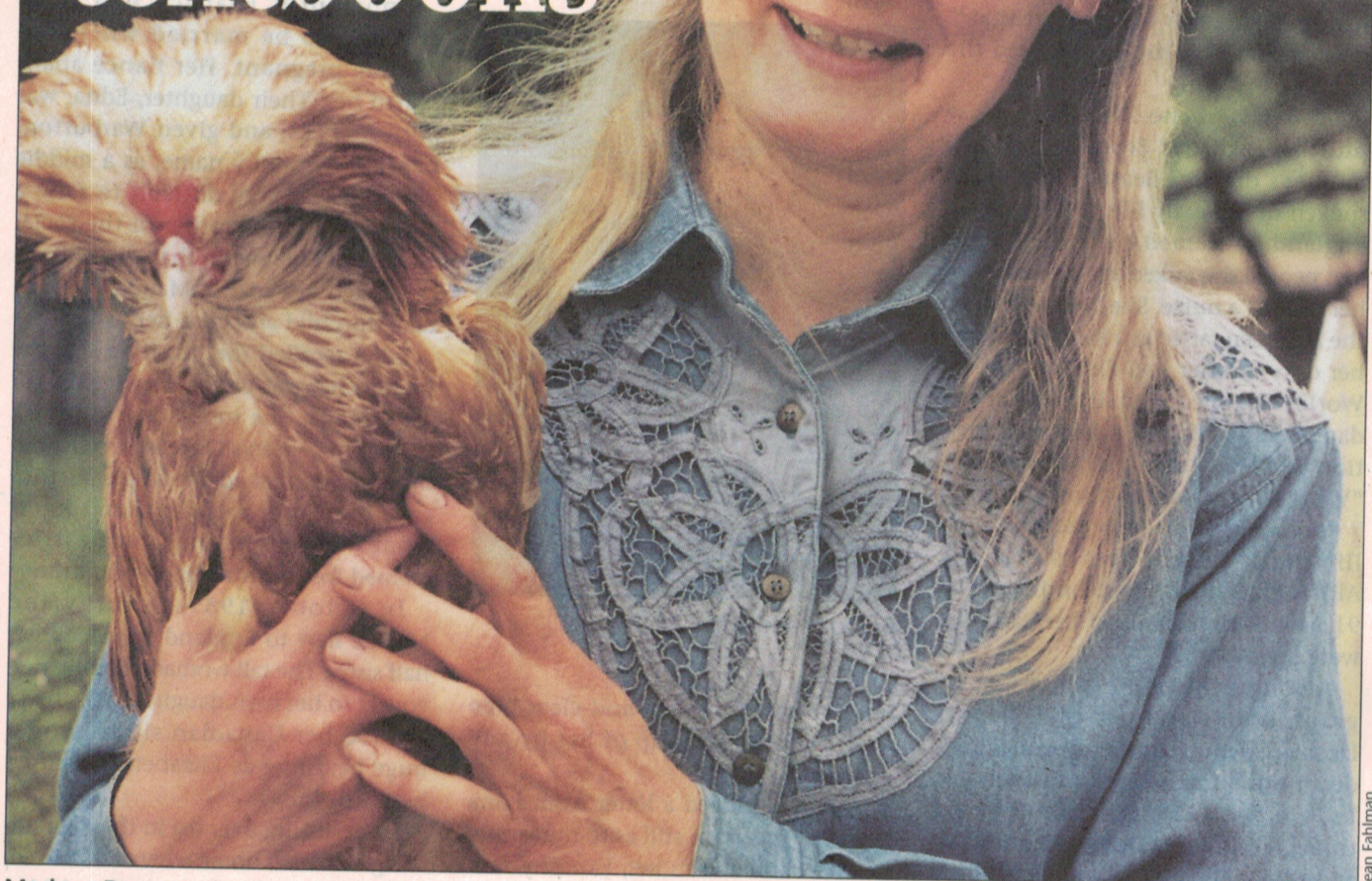
Apparently Beatrice had been engaged to be married when she became pregnant. Her fiancé abandoned her. Their daughter, Edna, was born in 1912, and given Warburton, her father's family name, as a middle name. It was very difficult to raise a child as a single mother in the social climate of England in that era, so Beatrice asked her friend, Maud Wyatt, to take the child and raise her.

Edna recalled the last time she saw her mother was before Beatrice set sail for Canada. She took Edna to a park where they sat in silence as seven-year-old Edna munched the apple Beatrice gave her. Edna says she didn't know what was happening, but Beatrice seemed lost in thought and far away.

In October, 1989, Dorothy and Marnie flew to England to meet their half sister. The tall woman clinging nervously to her own daughter, Elizabeth, greeted her Canadian sisters with a huge bear hug as Elizabeth reassured her, "They're OK."

Later, sitting over tea in the big rambling Victorian home where Edna lived, Marnie mentioned the picture of Edna that had sat on their mother's dresser for years. Edna got up and went into her bedroom, returning with the picture of the little girl and young woman. The picture that had disappeared from their mother's dressing table had been sent back to Edna in England. On the back, Beatrice had written, "Edna Murray, 18 months old, Feb. 1914 & her mother." At the bottom she'd added, "My much treasured photo, Beatrice & Edna, Feb. 1914." Two treasures were now part of the family where they belonged. ■■

Feathered and furry textbooks



Jean Fahlgren

Marlene Ronsman holds a Polish chicken.

By Jean Fahlgren

Marlene Ronsman, in 30 years of teaching, encouraged hundreds of students to respect nature and the environment. Her students were given the opportunity to observe animals, understand them and take some responsibility in caring for them.

Ronsman transported birds and animals from her private menagerie to the schools where she taught to provide

first-hand experience for her Grade 1 and 2 pupils.

About 10 years ago, Ronsman started increasing her collection of pets, always thinking "This will be the next thing I take to show the kids." She lives with her parents on an acreage on the outskirts of Tyvan, Sask., and she brought animals to her classroom in Weyburn. One year she brought her class out to the acreage to view the animals in their natural setting, but she said it was easier to take the animals to them.

Her pet snake lived at the school for several years, and the children seemed to enjoy it. When someone stole the snake, a staff member replaced it with an iguana. However, this creature, susceptible to cold and changing temperatures, wouldn't be safe at the school; she had to keep it in a cage at home.

He is a nicer pet than the snake, she admits, but she believes having the snake at school helped convince many children not to fear reptiles.

"I always loved nature," she empha-

sized. "I grew up on a farm and had pets—hamsters, guinea pigs and birds."

She developed a teaching philosophy based on caring for animals. "As a teacher I wanted children to love animals because I know that people who are kind to animals are also more kind to humans. You seldom see a kind, compassionate person who hates animals."

She wanted her students to respect animals and willingly take responsibility for their care.

That's why she took sheep and lambs to school, as well as her spectacular red golden male pheasant, ornamental chickens and rabbits. At Thanksgiving, she would introduce a turkey to the classroom. When a student later asked, "Did you eat him?" she would use the opportunity to talk about the food chain, pointing out that eventually most animals, including 4-H calves, end up on the table as food because "They are not pets forever."

As an extension of the classroom, Ronsman had students at Assiniboia Park School in Weyburn plant some 700 trees to beautify the grounds. The Canadian Wildlife Federation awarded her a plaque last spring for that initiative.

Ronsman, who taught for 30 years, retired last June. She'll miss the youngsters, but not the twice-daily drive between Tyvan and Weyburn. She had long days, given the time required to look after her animals and birds, and for classroom preparation, and care of her aged parents. She said she had to be up at 5:30 each morning to feed all the animals, then drive 40 miles on sometimes treacherous roads. Blizzards and ice made the trips tiring. In all those years, she had only one accident, when she hit a deer, but she knew she'd just been lucky.

Ronsman intends to keep her foot in the door by doing some substitute teaching. Meanwhile, she'll enjoy having more time for other interests and the care of her ever-growing collection of animal friends.

Her interest in animals led her to raise registered rabbits for sale but she joked that she would pay \$100 for a buck and customers would complain about paying \$2 for a rabbit if it didn't have registration papers. She gave up trying to sell rabbits.

She had better financial success rais-

ing and selling canaries. She raised 50-60 canaries a season for sale but when the breeders grew too old she stopped. She might start raising them with new stock: "I love their songs," she said.

Ronsman also raised and sold pheasants, letting them set their own eggs or incubating eggs.

These days she raises and keeps animals purely for pleasure, having lost the desire to try and make money that way. Because she has to buy all her feed, the production costs outweigh the returns.

Trying to hit the trends of exotic animals and birds is difficult because they change so quickly. Right now, bantam chickens are a hot item.

Touring a visitor around her acreage, Ronsman stops at the pen holding Royal Palm turkeys. Nearby is the home of red golden pheasants. The female, unfairly, is dull brown, while the male's striking plumage is red, gold and black. Ronsman has specialty chickens of many kinds, as well, including Polish, Silver Phoenix and bantams.

Ronsman once belonged to the Saskatchewan Bird and Small Animal Association and she showed her stock.

In the sheep pasture are six ewes, one ram and five lambs. There were 15 lambs born but there were disappointing losses. One ewe had five lambs, so Ronsman had to bottle-feed two of them. The ewe let the others get cold and they died.

An advantage of the sheep is that they keep the grass trimmed around the acreage and she uses the wool for her weaving hobby. The black wool has no commercial value, but works well in tapestry weaving.

Another pen holds six peacocks with seven young. The males were too shy to extend their splendid tails for the camera.

Three parrots live in the house, all of them having their say in how things are done. The African Gray parrot can mimic everything he hears, particularly if it is something said in a loud voice, as in her scoldings of her little house dog, Ronsman said with a laugh.

Ronsman's new German Shepherd, her first dog of this breed, does guard duty outside. She is using a clicker to give commands and to emphasize positive behavior. Now that she has more time, she's interested in training dogs for sheep herding and tracking.

Her latest acquisitions are two llamas, a male and a female, and she has tried using the clicker to train them too.

"Llamas are intelligent," she noted. "They figure out how to avoid doing what they don't want to do." The male,

Pokemon, has an attitude, and tries to dominate the female, she said.

No respectable animal farm could do without horses and there are two adult Arabians for both riding and pulling buggies and carts. Ronsman also has some oversized miniatures that she drives.

The one animal she doesn't keep around anymore is a goat. She found it difficult to keep her goats fenced in and they were hard on her garden.

In addition to her passion for animals, Ronsman is a weaver and collector of old looms and spinning wheels. This winter, she wants to work with the Ashford loom she recently bought at an auction. She also has five spinning wheels.

Among them is an oak spinning wheel estimated to be 100 years old. She repaired it after finding it at an antique store, and varnished it many times to preserve the wood. When she took it to class to demonstrate to her students, "They loved it," she said. "The class also did tapestry weaving in art and then when they had spare time they would carry on with their weaving happily."

She enjoys "finding old things and making them work again," she said. "I first started out with Aladdin lamps, making them work, but right now my plan is to work with the loom to weave."

When teachers and youngsters returned to school this month, Ronsman surely felt a tinge of regret, but she can keep busy full time with the animals, a garden she has long neglected, and her fibre work. ■

"I WANTED TO TEACH THEM TO ENJOY THE ENVIRONMENT AND WORK TO PRESERVE IT."



Sheila Robertson

The Ravine

Memory by Barbara Anne

As a child, I spent much of my time going on adventurous expeditions in MacKinnon Ravine. Although it was in the middle of the city, the ravine was a boundless world, full of gold. During the summer holidays, I would wake up, throw on some clothes and gobble down most of my alphabet cereal. I could not wait to run out the door and go to visit the ravine.

One entrance to the ravine was seven blocks from where I lived, just a short walk. Nearby was a long wooden foot bridge spanning the ravine. I never liked standing on top, fearing it was going to fall down when I was in the middle. Yet nothing stopped me from climbing all the way to the top on the cross-section of wood that secured the bridge to the ground.

There was also a creek at this end of the ravine, fed by a culvert from which water dribbled and gurgled. The creek flowed down the small embankment, trickling over the rocks all the way to the North Saskatchewan River, five miles away.

The creek was full of life. Beetles, frogs and toads jumped in and out of the water. They would land on dried, sparkling pebbles soaking them from

their jumps. Some toads had black speckles on their brown backs and fit perfectly in my cupped hands.

I would see all kinds of animals when I followed the creek along to the river. Big and little skunks and porcupines walked near me, oblivious to my presence. Everywhere I looked, I saw squirrels running up and down trees. They would chatter, continuing their conversations while darting from place to place with their bushy tails swishing back and forth. Some birds would be flying above while others pecked on the ground, looking for brown or white worms that lived on the branches and under tree bark.

I would climb the old trees that swayed back and forth, beckoning to me with their reaching arms. I'd peek into the huge culvert, confronting the monsters and ghosts I imagined lurking there. Beside the culvert stood The Old Oak Tree, a giant amongst the smaller trees rooted in the embankment near the bridge.

Sometimes, on my journey down to the river, I would find large, yellow-colored dirt caves. I'd duck into them, pretending to hide from my enemies. Or I'd use them as storehouses for the collections of shiny rocks I gathered as I followed the creek.

When I reached the river, I would go swimming, although my parents had

forbidden it. I would stay close to the river's edge, though, because the water pressed hard against my body and ran by me very quickly. But one day, something in the water bit me. My ankle swelled up like a purple plum and clearly in the middle was a pinhead-sized hole covered with a tiny scab. This is where the water creature bit me. I never swam in the river after that.

I don't know just when I stopped going to the MacKinnon Ravine, but when I returned for a visit, 40 years had passed. My Old Oak Tree and the smaller trees around it were gone from the embankment. The city had chopped them down to add onto the road. Though the squirrels and birds are still around, I did not see any skunks or porcupines. All the frogs and toads were gone; there was a concrete pathway where the creek had been.

At the river's edge, floating on top of the water, I saw the colors of the rainbow swirling behind the passing motor boats. I wondered if the creature that had bitten me still lived in the water.

As I stood on the old wooden bridge near the entrance to the ravine, no longer afraid it was going to collapse under me, I missed the old MacKinnon Ravine. It seemed smaller now. ■

(Barbara Anne still lives in Edmonton, the site of MacKinnon's Ravine.)

GMOs AND THE GREAT WAR

By Verne Clemence

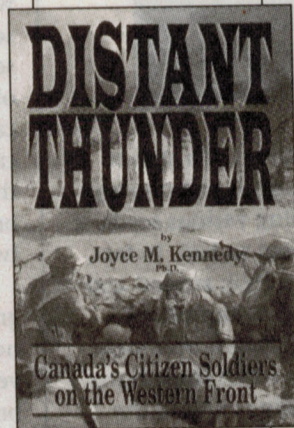
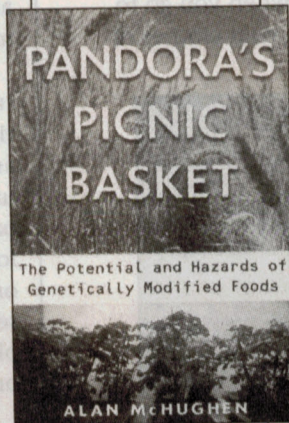
Alan McHughen, a professor and senior research scientist at the University of Saskatchewan, wanted to raise some issues in relation to genetically modified (GM) foods, so he wrote a book. He believes the time has come for the public to calmly assess the facts and look beyond the noisy but unproductive row GM has generated, especially in Europe.

In *Pandora's Picnic Basket: The Potential and Hazards of Genetically Modified Foods*, McHughen covers all facets of the GM science and takes on its critics in straightforward, accessible prose.

He dispenses with such myths as the one about a fish gene being transplanted into a tomato (it never happened), and a brazil nut gene put into soybeans (the project was abandoned in the testing stage because of fears over allergic reactions).

He challenges anti-GM protesters by pointing out that all plant breeding transfers DNA from one plant to another, and asks why society has never questioned improved strains of cereal crops, or fruit trees, or other food sources developed through conventional methods.

He also reminds readers that scientists have known about GM methods for 30 years. He points out that scores of pharmaceutical products and life-saving drugs have been developed through use of the science, among them the insulin now used by almost all diabetics.



He candidly discusses the shortfalls of his own profession in introducing the science of genetic modification. He also assesses, and finds fault with, the media's handling of the story, and the roles played by multinational companies that profit from the science.

Although McHughen favors labelling GM foods, he believes they have become so pervasive that that would no longer be possible. He counsels farmers to take advantage of the opportunities GM science presents. He suggests to consumers that they will do themselves far more harm through excessive worrying about food safety than by simply eating a balanced diet and trusting regulatory agencies to see that the food is safe.

The author, 46, developed and registered his own strain of genetically modified flax. It has never been marketed because of concerns in Europe over GM crops, and in August McHughen and the university applied to have the variety deregistered.

Pandora's Picnic Basket was launched in London, England, in June. Published by Oxford University Press, it sells in Canadian bookstores for \$34.95.

A conflict of another kind and another time was the genesis for *Distant Thunder*, a new book on the First World War.

Subtitled *Canada's Citizen Soldiers on the Western Front*, the book chronicles the wartime experiences of Gunner Robert James Kennedy, a 22-year-old farm boy from Orleans, Ont., who volunteered for service the

day after Britain declared war on Germany.

The author is the soldier's daughter, Joyce Kennedy, 66, who now lives in Ventura, California. She and her siblings knew very little of their father's war record until after his death, when she discovered a set of his diaries.

She began to transcribe the diaries and along the way developed a compelling interest in her father's harrowing war experiences, and in Canada's role in the so-called Great War. Ultimately, she began to focus on why it was that so little was known about the part this country played in the historic conflict. What she learned led to the writing of the book.

Kennedy's father was one of 619,636 Canadians who crossed the ocean to support Mother Britain in the war of 1914-18. By the time the fighting stopped, 66,655 of them were dead and 172,950 had been wounded, including Kennedy.

He was discharged in 1919, three times decorated for acts of valor and still feeling the effects of a serious wound. Eventually he married the fiancée he had left behind because of the war and found a career in business. He rarely spoke of the horrors of the trenches, the mud and the blood of warfare by attrition.

This is a well researched and carefully constructed account of a seminal event in the life of this country. Sunflower University Press is the publisher; it costs \$29.95. ■

THE BURRS AND THE BEES

Column No. 1589
by Doug Gilroy

My picture features a nice little baldpate duck. When on the farm and walking the wooded shore of the creek I would often surprise a pair of baldpates, more correctly known as



Doug Gilroy

American widgeons. The common name for this duck originates with the white patch on the crown of the drake.

This species winters in the United States, Mexico and Central America. Nesting takes place on the ground near water, the nest consisting of grass with a lining of down.

I took the shot with a 400-mm lens while in a blind at the edge of a large slough west of Condie, Sask. Duck hunters will always shoot a few baldpates. They are smaller than mallards, but when stuffed with dressing and roasted in the oven they make real good eating.

There are lots of hitchhikers these days, but I do not mean the human kind. Walk through the fields or woods and the

first thing you know your pant legs and socks are full of tiny burrs. Examine the coat of your dog and you will more than likely find that he has got all kinds of them too; perhaps you will find some big burrs.

No doubt you will do some muttering when you go to work to rid your clothes of

Baldpate ducks like to nest on the ground near water. This one was at the edge of a slough near Condie, Sask.

them, but when you stop to think that this is just one way of distributing various seeds, it does not seem so bad. In fact, the more we look around and study seed distribution, the more fascinating it becomes.

Naturally when these burrs and stick-tights cling to the coats of animals, and clothes of people, they are carried quite some distance before finally falling off and eventually sprouting. Some members of the pea family distribute by bursting their seed pods with a bang so that the seeds fly out in several directions away from the mother plant. Caragana shrubs are a good example of this. Stand near a hedge on a hot August day and you can hear the seed pods bursting all over the place.

Some seeds are equipped with parachutes and when caught by a strong wind will sail away for a great distance. The dandelion, fireweed and goat's-beard are good examples of this type. The seeds of the fireweed or great willow herb are said to travel in this fashion for hundreds of miles.

The seeds of fruit-bearing trees are in the fruit itself. The ripened fruit is eaten by birds and many of the seeds are undigested. By the time they pass from the bird, they are a long way from the point of origin. In addition, many seeds are carried to various places in the mud that collects on birds' feet.

The trees in the valley are becoming quite bare now, but the ash and maples are covered with clusters of rich, tarnished seeds. I always admire the ash seeds, their long slender oblong shape reminds me of canoe paddles. These types are called winged seeds, for when they are whisked off in a breeze they travel with a twirling motion.

Today, along a marsh, I saw growths of bullrushes with the heavy ornamental seed clusters very ripe. The least little bit of breeze would loosen up the downy stuff and most of it would sail away and fall in the water where the current would distribute them along the course of the creek where a new crop would grow in future years. Many other plants are also distributed throughout the country by water. ■



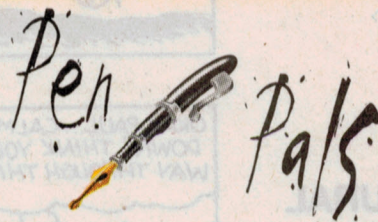
How to
teach
us: 13

mail: P.O. Box 2500, Saskatoon, Sask. S7K 2C4
e-mail: kidspin@producer.com
phone: 1-800-667-6978 or (306) 665-3543
fax: (306) 934-2401 (no art by fax, please)
KiDSPiN co-ordinator: Kurt Hofmann

The Kids' Help Phone is free, it's confidential, and it's 24 hours a day. A friend is always on the other end of the line.

1-800-668-6868

Send your original colored or black-and-white art (on plain white paper please), science questions, poetry, short stories or anything else you would like to see. Make sure you include your name, age, full address and telephone number!



Howdy! I live on a farm and I'm 10. I want a penpal my age with any interests. I will write back. Kanesa Shwetz, Box 154, Waskatenau, Alta., T0A 3P0.

Hi. I'm 9 and live on a farm. I am looking for a boy or girl penpal aged 9-11. I like hockey, baseball and videogames. Please write to Steven Johnson, Box 98, Francis, Sask., S0G 1V0.

Hi, my name is Crystal Psotka and I'm 14. My hobbies are biking, basketball and I love animals. I would like a penpal aged 13-15. If I sound interesting please write to 644 Tothill Street, Regina, Sask., S4T 7S2.

Hi, my name is Kiara Hiebert. I am 10. I would like a penpal ages 10-14. I like baseball, horses, goats and jersey cows. Please write to Box 494, Warman, Sask., S0K 4S0.

Hey! 16-year-old looking for penpal ages 15-18. Some of my interests include sports, animals, music, hanging around with friends, etc. I will respond to every letter. Tracy Ziegler, 424 Milburn Cresc., Swift Current, Sask., S9H 4V7.

Would like a girl penpal aged 12-15 years, who will always write back. I like reading, music, writing poems and letters, rollerblading and just hanging out. If you want a penpal, write: Jenny Woodard, 5 - 650 Bowen St., Magog, PQ J1X 1C8.

Penpal ages 16 and up wanted. Hobbies include swimming, writing letters and outdoor stuff. — Elaine Maendel, Pine Creek Colony, Box 299, Austin, Man. R0H 0C0.

My name is Gheorghe Beliveau and I am 11. Would like female penpals 11 or 12 years. Hobbies include reading, writing, singing, dancing (tap dancing), playing sports, soccer, badminton, kickball, football, basketball. I live on a farm and have lots of animals. If I sound interesting, please write: Box 384, Rockglen, Sask. S7H 3R0.

Penpal wanted any age, any gender, any interests. You must be committed. Promise to write back. I am an eleven-year-old country girl that likes just about anything. If interested, write to: Seyara Shwetz, Box 154, Waskatenau, Alta. T0A 3P0.

Hi! My name is Kimberly Kossowan, 13 years old. Would like a boy or girl penpal ages 12-14. I like music, camping, and drawing. If interested, please write: Box 234, Glendon, Alta. T0A 1P0. Will respond to all letters.

I want to know!

We tackle your questions

Send your questions to I want to know! c/o KiDSPiN, Box 2500, Saskatoon, Sask. S7K 2C4 or e-mail us at kidspin@producer.com.

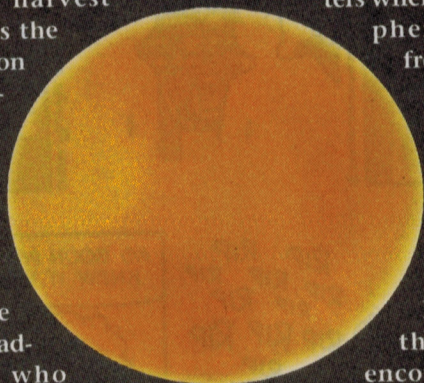
Q: What is a harvest moon?

A: The harvest moon is the full moon nearest the autumnal equinox, the instant that fall occurs in the northern hemisphere. Before the days when combines came with powerful headlights, farmers who were working late to get the crop off relied on moonlight to help them navigate the fields. Most of the time, the moon's orbit carries it about 13 degrees along its path every day, so a nearly full moon will rise about an hour later each night. This means there will be no moonlight in early evening a few days after a full moon. But near the autumnal equinox, the moon's orbit is close to the eastern horizon and the nearly full moon rises only 20 minutes later each evening, so there's a lot of moonlight to work with in early evenings for several nights in a row.

But what really sets the harvest

moon apart is its color — when the moon is low on the horizon it appears to be a large orange ball. That's because of the way light scatters when it hits our atmosphere. White light from the sun is actually made of seven distinct colors, each with its own wavelength. Blue light has the shortest wavelength and scatters the easiest when it encounters dust in the atmosphere, while red has the longest. A harvest moon sits low on the horizon, so its light passes at a slant through the atmosphere where there's more dust, so most of the light on the blue end of the spectrum is scattered away. The remaining moonlight appears to be an orange-red color. As the moon rises higher in the sky later in the evening, moonlight travels a shorter distance through the atmosphere, so there is less dust and other particles in the atmosphere to scatter the lightwaves and the moon loses its orange color.

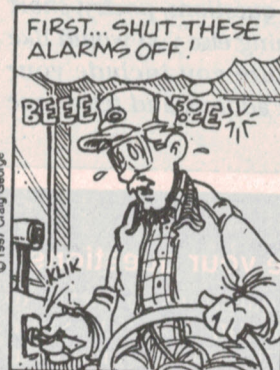
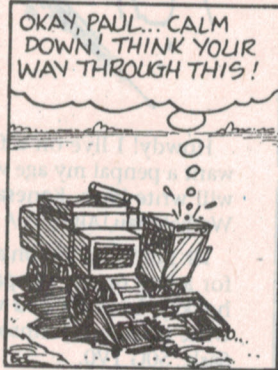
— Michelle



PEANUTS Classics



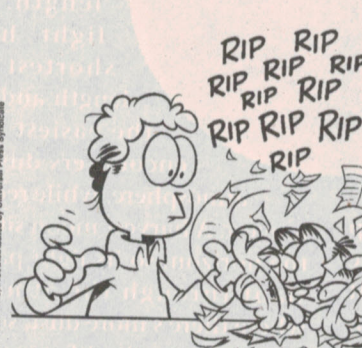
RURAL ROOTZ



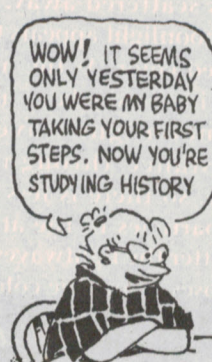
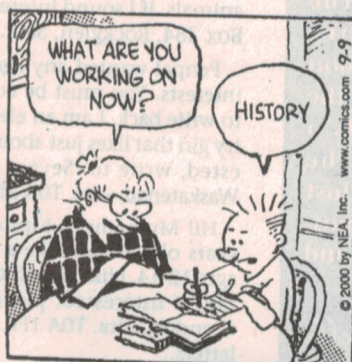
For BETTER or for WORSE



GARFIELD

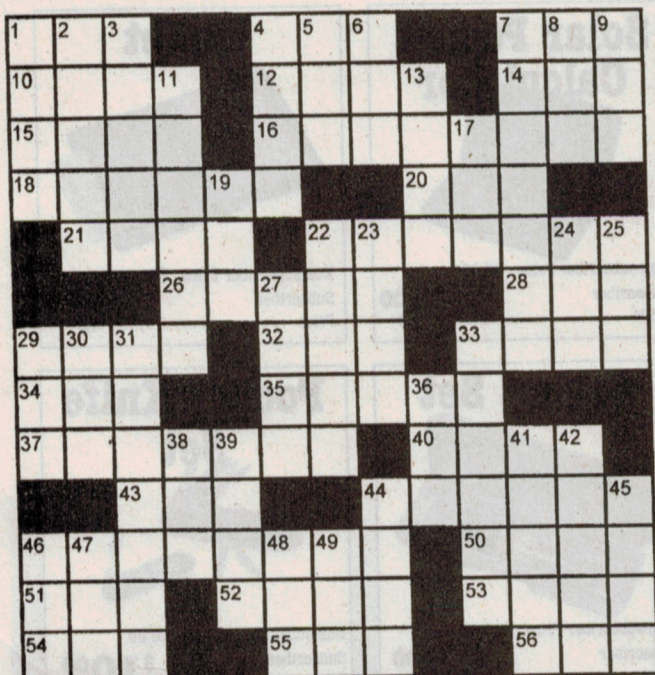


BETTY



Canadian Criss Cross

by Walter D. Feener



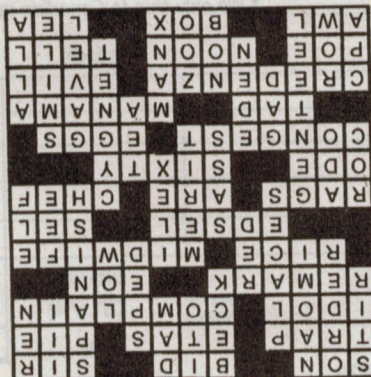
ACROSS

1. What Hector is to Priam
4. Invitation
7. Word following Dear
10. Disk thrower
12. Greek vowels
14. One-twelfth of an anna
15. False god
16. Make a fuss about
18. Comment on
20. Billion years
21. Major world cereal
22. Obstetrical assistant
26. Ron Howard's car in "American Graffiti"
28. French salt
29. Dusters
32. Exist
33. Escoffier for one
34. Pindaric
35. LX
37. Overcrowd
40. Breakfast food
43. Boy
44. Capital of Bahrain
46. Sideboard
50. Infamous
51. "The Gold Bug" author
52. Twelve o'clock

DOWN

1. Prison
2. Honorary society
3. Wynonna's mother
4. Former Yardbird
5. Dancer Michio
6. Floodgate
7. Romance language
8. 3
9. Stimp's friend
11. Finds employment for
13. Drove fast
17. Girl Scouts founder
19. Barber pole

22. Commendable quality
23. Holm oak
24. Charge for advice
25. Santa's helper
27. Answer back
29. Bird of Arabian legend
30. Trouble
31. Well-bred and polite
33. Young swan
36. Congou
38. Wander about
39. Tree of life site
41. Auctioneer's mallet
42. Look pleased
44. Tailless cat
45. ___ breve
46. Auditor
47. Squabble
48. The head
49. Menagerie



MAILBOX

Listings are free but only run once. Please be brief. Issues are prepared three weeks in advance of publication date. Send info to: Mailbox, Western People, Box 2500, Saskatoon S7K 2C4.

History Book 2000. Present and past residents of the Kyle, White Bear, Sanctuary, Tuberoose, Sask. areas, submit new and/or updated family and community histories from 1980 to: History Book Committee 2000, Box 96, Kyle, Sask. S0L 1T0, fax 306-375-2999, e-mail: newbtob@hotmail.com.

Seeking whereabouts of Hattie Beng, 78 years old, attended Regina Secretarial School in 1940 or 1941 by Lillian (Lund) Nicklas. Hattie was wedding attendant for Lillian Lund. Please contact J. Nicklas, 896 Georgeann Road, Kamloops, B.C. V2B 6H8, 250-579-8293, e-mail: jnicklas@sd73.bc.ca.

Wanted: Lanarte cross stitch charts, especially Vase in Windowpane. Would also like Pump/Birds, Hats with Flowers, Reading Girl, Cottage, and Flowers Haenraets. Contact: Orva Cameron, Box 245, Dinsmore, Sask. S0L 0T0.

Wanted to buy in good condition, Canadian Cook Book by Wattie and Donaldson, published by Ryerson. Write with cost and condition to: C. Benson, 5214 - 49 St., Lloydminster, Alta. T9V 0K6.

Wanted: Penny match covers with names on them and Fields phentex, blue or pink. Have various songs, small cards with pictures on back. Write to: Frances Collier, Box 1207, Burns Lake, B.C. V0J 1E0.

Would like to hear from people that came from pioneering stock. — Peter Letkeman, Box 132, Robson, B.C. V0G 1X0.

Wanted: Books, Storm House, author unknown and Spunky, author Hader, about adventures of a Shetland pony. Also, patterns for the wild rose. Please write to: Julie Jacober, 102 Shannon Dr. S.E., Medicine Hat, Alta. T1B 4C2.

Kinsella and area homecoming, July 6-8, 2001. Anyone interested in attending or knowing someone who would, please send names and addresses ASAP to: Deb Oracheski, Box 27, Kinsella, Alta. T0B 2N0.

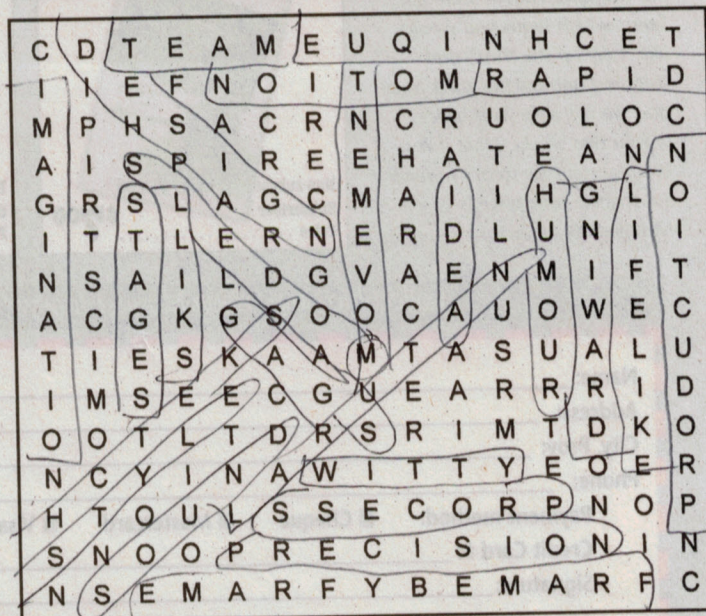
Lomond and district history book, 919 pages, \$25 plus \$6 shipping or two books for \$45. Make cheque payable to Lomond Drop-In, Box 53, Lomond, Alta. T0L 1G0.

Neville history books. Contact 306-627-3619.

ANIMATION

Word Find puzzle
by Janice M. Peterson

When all the words in the list have been found, the letters left over will spell the solution.



Haven't got your Western Producer knife set or belt buckle?!

Belt Buckle



Non-subscriber Price - \$17.99
Subscriber Price **\$10.00**

Multi-tool Wrench



Non-subscriber Price - \$12.99
Subscriber Price **\$8.00**

Solar Pocket Calculator



Non-subscriber Price - \$8.00
Subscriber Price **\$6.00**

Wallet



Non-subscriber Price - \$10.00
Subscriber Price **\$5.00**

Socket Set



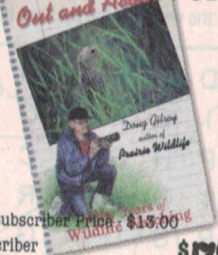
Non-subscriber Price - \$15.00
Subscriber Price **\$10.00**

Pocket Knife Set



Non-subscriber Price - \$16.99
Subscriber Price **\$10.00**

Wildlife Book



Non-subscriber Price - \$15.00
Subscriber Price **\$7.00**

Beanie



Non-subscriber Price - \$15.00
Subscriber Price **\$8.00**

Multi-tool Plier



Non-subscriber Price - \$12.99
Subscriber Price **\$8.00**

Now you can purchase most of our merchandise directly from us. Select which items you would like, tally up the total, add shipping and federal sales taxes, and we will ship your order within two weeks. Note if you are a current Western Producer subscriber, your price is significantly less...

Collectible Cow Fridge Magnet free with every order. (While supplies last)



Name: _____ Subscription No: _____
Address: _____
City, Prov: _____ Postal Code: _____
Phone: _____
Payment method: ☐ Cheque ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa
Credit Card #: _____
Signature: _____ Expiry Date: _____
* We only ship to Canadian addresses

Quantity	Item	Price Each	Total
	Shipping		\$3.00

* Orders subject to availability

Mail to:

Western Producer Subscriptions
Box 2500, Saskatoon, SK S7K 2C4 or call Toll Free 1-800-667-6929

We'll pay the provincial tax

Sub-Total
GST (7%)
Total